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ABSTRACT

In December 1973, the Committee to Improve Performance of School Personnel was established. The task of the Committee was to create an effective system of improving professional performance which could be put into practice in any school situation in Kentucky, a system which could be utilized with all professional staff members whether they be classroom teachers, administrators, or other professional personnel. A State Board Regulation was passed on September 10, 1975, which required each local board of education to provide for the involvement of every professional school employee in an individualized program of self-evaluation and performance improvement through the application of the Kentucky Plan. The Kentucky Plan is designed to assist in the development of a system tailored to the particular needs of a school district. For successful implementation of the Kentucky Plan, there must be harmony between participating parties in the development of local school district plans. The resources of the State Department of Education and the Educational Regions must be effectively utilizing to provide the necessary skills needed in a program of this magnitude. The Educational Region is designed to provide ancillary service to the local school districts under the approval of the State Department of Education. The Educational Region can be an effective delivery system in the implementation of the Kentucky Plan. Professional organizations and higher education must also be involved in its implementation. (RC)

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THE KENTUCKY PLAN FOR IMPROVING THE PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: THE STATE OVERVIEW

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Let us look briefly at the history of professional development in the State of Kentucky. In the midst of the World War II teacher shortage, only 30% of the elementary teachers had a bachelor's degree. As late as 1947, certification standards permitted the employment of persons with only two years of college preparation. Unfortunately, in many school districts, high school graduates had to be employed to teach elementary schools. Ten years later, The Foundation Law was passed and funded in 1956 by the General Assembly. At this time, less than half of the elementary school teachers (42.7%) had the bachelor's degree or higher preparation. The Foundation Law provided a salary scale with differentials based on academic preparation.

Ten years later in 1965-66, 91.1% of the Kentucky elementary teachers had the bachelor's degree or higher preparation in comparison to a national figure of 89.1%. It was at this point that the State Board of Education established the planned fifth year program as a certificate renewal requirement to become effective with the 1967-68 school year.

Today, virtually all elementary school teachers have the bachelor's degree or higher certification.

Today, however, other straws are blowing in the wind.

The concept of accountability that gained momentum in the late 1960's has emerged as a reality in the 1970's. Up to June, 1974, thirty states had enacted legislation that focuses on various approaches to attain accountability.

Other states have chosen to introduce accountability into their planning efforts through executive order or policy statements.

Financial restraints and the demand for fiscal accountability have led to the development of modern management techniques. Under this rubric fall such innovations as Program Planning & Budgeting Systems (PPBS), Management by Objectives (MBO) & Management Information Systems (MIS). Another focus of accountability legislation is directed to Professional Personnel Evaluation. As of June, 1974, fourteen states had some specific type of professional personnel evaluation mandated by state legislatures. To illustrate the trend toward professional evaluation by state legislatures, let me cite the following statistics:[1]

From 1963-71, one state used professional personnel evaluation (1969 - Washington State.)

In 1971 - five (5) states adopted some type of professional personnel evaluation.

1972 - three (3) states

1973 - two (2) states

1974 - three (3) states

There have also been at least six changes in existing laws.

All of us realize that accountability isn't a "one-way street" with responsibility directed at educators alone. The people--parents, students, state legislators, school board members and tax payers--share this responsibility. Whereas, the effectiveness and efficiency of education can be charged to educators, we must remember that it is the public that makes the final determination what the support level of public education will be.[2] Therefore, I am convinced that because of the current economic picture, decreasing public schoolenrollments, and an oversupply

[1] Cooperative Accountability Project, Legislation By The States' Accountability and Assessment in Education. (Report #2) 1974. pp 2-6. Denver: Cooperative Accountability Project.

[2] IBID., Page 1.

of educators, the general public will continue to exert pressure for some type of accountability in the foreseeable future.

Secondly, it is recognized that while academic preparation is necessary and important, true professionalism requires additional dimensions of professional growth and improvement. Because of new curriculums and programs in all areas, and because of more sophisticated programs of school organization which truly involve the staff in shared decision-making, team planning and team teaching, etc., it is increasingly difficult to provide adequate staff development programs from the standpoint of logistics as well as monetary cost to the school district. Therefore, there is a need for a systematic plan for encouraging and assisting in the continuing improvement of the performance of professional school personnel.

DEVELOPMENT

The Kentucky Project for Improving the Professional Performance of School Personnel emerged from informal discussions involving personnel from the State Department of Education. On December 1, 1973, the State sponsored an invitational Conference on Improving Professional Personnel at the Brown Education Center in Louisville to explore the concept of Performance Objectives as an approach to the improvement of professional performance. At this conference, State Department personnel presented the philosophy supporting the performance objectives approach and the basic steps involved in implementing the performance objectives approach to professional improvement. Recognizing the concern of citizens for quality education and of the desire of the professional educators to provide a competent teacher for every classroom and correspondingly competent educational leaders in each district, the "Committee on Improving Performance of School Personnel" decided to serve as a Change Agent (Catalyst) in education. The overwhelming response of the participants was to endorse the idea of improved professional

performance and the performance objective approach. Candidates were nominated for appointment to a steering committee for a statewide program.

Two weeks later on December 14, 1973, a meeting was held in Frankfort with the presidents of the various professional organizations and representatives from the State Department of Education to plan further the creation of a permanent steering committee for the project. At this meeting, it was decided that the steering committee would consist of:

* A chairman elected by the committee from its own membership
* A secretary from State Department of Education designated by State Superintendent
* Three classroom teachers
* One representative from KEA committee on Teacher Education and Instruction
* One representative - KEA Board of Directors
* One elementary principal
* One secondary principal
* One supervisor
* One superintendent
* One representative at large from KASA
* One Parent Teacher Association representative
* One representative from the School Boards Association
* One representative from Higher Education
* Liaison consultants from the Bureau of Instruction, Bureau of Vocational Education and Research

Following this December 14th meeting, the Superintendent of Public Instruction officially appointed a committee with 13 members.

On 1 April 1974, the Superintendent of Public Instruction formally announced formation of the Kentucky Project for Improving the Professional Performance of School Personnel. The first meeting of the committee was 9 September 1974.

The task of the Committee to Improve Professional Performance of School Personnel was to: "Create an effective system of improving professional performance which can be put into practice in any school situation in Kentucky, a system which can be utilized with all professional staff members whether they be classroom teacher, administrators or other professional personnel."

The Committee was asked to explore the performance objectives approach which had been the focus to that point and to look at other approaches and feel free to consider them.

As further guidance, the following suggestions were offered:

1. The design should be easily communicated.
2. The thrust of this particular project should focus on the improvement of performance--nothing else.
3. The system should be designed to foster and improve professional relationships as opposed to creating tensions and strained relationships.
4. Full implementation of the Project will be a developmental process--each year's progress should be evaluated and refinements made for the next year's operation.

The Committee, in the performance of its assigned task, endeavored to comply with the charge given at the time of its inception. A very brief summary of the work of this committee illustrates this as follows:

1. An effort was made to maintain support for the work of the Committee with the constituent organizations.
2. In March, 1975, Teacher Ed. Circular #306 (Blue Book) was distributed to the constituent organizations as a progress report. The work was received and favorable resolutions passed at the annual conventions of three of these organizations: KEA, KSBA, KCP&T.
3. An Invitational Conference was held in Louisville on 18-19 May for the governing boards of the KEA organizations. Invitations were further expanded to include the KEA committee on Teacher Education & Instruction, the presidents of the local educational associations and presidents of the KEA district organizations.
4. The president and president-elect from each of the constituent administrative organizations were invited to attend the July meeting of the Committee to discuss the progress report in the same manner as had been done at the May meeting.
5. The Committee then reviewed and evaluated all suggestions and made modifications and refinements as a result of these meetings.

Up to this point, I have talked briefly about the history and development of the Kentucky Plan for Improving the Professional Performance of School Personnel. Let us turn our attention to the Board Regulation passed on 10 September 75. In all probability, this regulation will be published in the November State Register with hearings scheduled for December, January or February.

The regulation as passed requires each local board of education to provide for involvement of every professional school employee in an individualized program of self-evaluation and performance improvement through the application of the

Kentucky Plan. Each school district operating within the guidelines of the Kentucky Plan will be responsible for developing an improvement plan by means of a local committee. The Kentucky Plan is designed to assist in the development of a system tailored to the particular needs of a school district. It provides an opportunity to involve representatives from the local school system who will be directly affected by the new system of improving performance. Total staff involvement, I believe, is an absolute necessity and critical to the success of the program. Those who are affected must participate in its design, installation or implementation, administration and review.

Once the local plan is developed, the local board of education incorporates the local plan with its official policies or else adopts appropriate policies for the implementation of the plan. To assist in the creation of the local district plan, the State Committee is preparing a Guide for the Development of the Local School District Plan which can be utilized by the local committee in the development of its plan. In addition, the State Committee proposes to sponsor the preparation of resource documents, perhaps audio tapes and slides and other resource material.

There is provision for flexibility as programs evolve and develop in new directions from the initial state plan. Any existing exemplary program for the improvement of professional performance at the local district level should not be impaired.

It is further stipulated that the Superintendent of Public Instruction is authorized to approve an alternate local school district plan for the improvement of professional performance of school personnel that is not based on the Kentucky Plan provided the proposed alternate plan is submitted in written form and provided the proposal is in keeping with the philosophy of the Kentucky Plan.

"The Superintendent of Public Instruction will appoint a State Advisory Committee for Improving the Professional Performance of School Personnel to include representation from such professional organizations, lay organizations, and institutions as he deems appropriate."

The State Advisory Committee shall have the following duties:

1. Make recommendations to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Implementation of State Board regulations;
2. Provide a continuous liaison and communications function between the institutions and organizations and the State Department of Education;
3. Conduct a continuing study of the various approaches to the improvement of professional personnel in operation in other states and to study the progress and the effectiveness of the application of the Kentucky Plan within the state and to make recommendations from time to time for the further refinement and improvement of the process in Kentucky;
4. Assist in the efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of the Kentucky Plan.

Let us now turn our attention to the "Kentucky Plan." The Kentucky Plan will include all professional school personnel from classroom teacher to local district superintendents.

"The Kentucky Plan is a process described below:

"1. To initiate the process, each person studies and clarifies the expectations of the job he is assigned to perform and determines the priority of the components of the assignment wherein he desires to improve his level of performance.

"2. Each person consults with a professional colleague to refine further the performance objectives and to develop jointly a plan of action for their accomplishment.

"3. A written plan of action is evolved which:

(a) identifies the specific performance objectives

(b) schedules the steps or actions to be taken by the person and the supporting actions to be taken by others for the achievement of the performance objectives

(c) states the means by which it will be determined that the performance objectives have been accomplished

(d) includes dates for subsequent meetings.

"4. The person and his colleague maintain appropriate records and each consultation period thereafter is utilized for:

(a) progress review and modification of the original plan of action, as appropriate

(b) repeating the process as additional performance objectives are identified."

IMPLEMENTATION

For successful implementation of the Kentucky Plan, there must be harmony between the participating parties in the development of local school district plans.

The resources of the State Department of Education and the Educational Regions must be effectively utilized to provide the necessary skills needed in a program of this magnitude. In a seminar on "Orientation to Improving Professional Performance of Staff" at Kentucky Dam Village, September 30 - October 2 for Ed. Region I & II, the Superintendent of Public Instruction indicated that money was being budgeted to support similar in-service sessions in other Ed. Regions.

The Educational Region is designed to provide ancillary services to the local school districts under the approval of the State Department of Education. It also seeks to provide for the cooperation and coordination of other agencies such as institutions of higher education, community agencies and etc., to effect the greatest possible number of services for the area.

The Educational Regions can be an efficient and effective delivery system in the implementation of the Kentucky Plan.

The professional organizations have an opportunity to assist in the implementation of the Kentucky Plan by planning district workshops to familiarize constituents with the Kentucky Plan. They can also help by establishing a climate within the local school district that will foster harmony and at the same time provide opportunities for true professional improvement. To do this will require honesty, maturity, trust and integrity on the part of personnel regardless of whether they are superintendents, principals, business officials, classroom teacher, supervisors, or other personnel.

Higher education must also be actively involved in the implementation of the Kentucky Plan both at the pre-service and in-service level. As local school districts begin to develop professional improvement plans, they will need assistance in development of a philosophy that affords the greatest possibility of positive change. As the school district becomes more sophisticated in its approach, standards of performance will be necessary which describe optimum behavior within every area of responsibility. These statements, along with job descriptions, are essential to the process.

Eventually, there will be a need to look at ways to systematically collect data and provide feedback. Sound principles of supervision support providing information when it is available and when it will improve an operation. Experience in industry has demonstrated that knowledge of a deficiency caused an immediate jump in proficiency.

Records must be developed which conform to the objectives of the improvement program. The instrument must be simple to use, yet provide a comprehensive record of what was agreed upon as well as a progress report concerning the status of goals and objectives.

Writing performance objectives is another area that will need attention in many local school districts.

In summary, then I would like to suggest that agencies having a responsibility for implementation of the Kentucky Plan, should begin to think about designing in-service programs and providing seminars for their constituents and for their respective service area which will develop readiness and create an awareness of the Kentucky Plan.

Despite the best techniques of involvement, some administrators and some teachers will be unable to freely accept the new approach. It will take time and in-service training. I would like to mention a few areas which, in my opinion, will need attention.

1. Workshops which provide practical experience in writing goals and objectives.
2. Workshops which will help districts develop performance standards. (This is more a long range need.)
3. Revised job descriptions, in many systems, will be needed (also a long range goal) -- Models available from National School Boards Association for $100.00.

4. Seminars should be designed to assist local school districts in the development of philosophy and rationale.
5. Workshops to give school personnel expertise in gathering data, interpreting data and conducting follow-up conferences.
6. Workshops to help personnel identify areas of need, establish priorities and set goals for improvement.
7. Workshops in human relations, communication skills, self-motivation, problem-solving, etc.
8. In-service on the characteristics of good teaching, good administration, etc.--one important aspect of the performance target approach is self-evaluation.
9. Techniques to ensure dialogue--dialogue is more than talk; it makes the way for meaningful, realistic discussions of what is happening on the job, what success is being realized on specific objectives and targets, what factors are impeding progress, what help is needed ....

In closing, let me say that contrary to the wishes of skeptics and critics of efforts to improve professional performance in Kentucky, I do not believe that it is a passing bandwagon or a fad. It is increasingly evident by the legislation enacted in other states and legislation that is being drafted here in Kentucky by State Legislators, that students are expected to succeed and the public schools have a responsibility to make it happen. This philosophy "puts the shoe on the other foot" in reference to the traditional outlook in public education which, in the past, has put the burden of responsibility on the student to get what he can from his school experience. The emphasis begins to shift from the classic input measures (human and other resources) to output measures (learning) in the educational system. In reality, we are being asked to narrow the discrepancy between what the

schools profess to teach and what students actually learn. We are being asked, as educators, at all levels, to assume responsibility for our actions.[3] What we do with the Kentucky Plan in the months ahead may well determine whether the educational profession can improve as a result of its own efforts or whether "outside sources" will prescribe the way that we will demonstrate to the public that we are providing adequate services in the performance of our tasks.

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[3] Cooperative Accountability Project. Bulletin, Issue III: July 1973 Denver: Colorado Department of Education